CONFERENCE OF THE EIGHTEEN-NATION COMMITTEE ON DISARMAMENT

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Working Paper on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty

The United Kingdom Delegation consider that priority in the field of nuclear arms control and disarmament should be given to a ban on underground tests of nuclear weapons; in their view the real danger of vertical proliferation lies in the development of more sophisticated weapons systems which a comprehensive test ban treaty would prevent. The United Kingdom Delegation favour the conclusion of a comprehensive test ban treaty at the earliest possible moment and as soon as terms that are generally acceptable can be agreed.

2. The principal avowed obstacle in the way of a comprehensive test ban treaty is the problem of on-site inspection. It may be noted, however, that since the early days of the negotiations on a comprehensive test ban treaty, the means of identifying incidents as earthquakes or explosions have been greatly improved and there is substantial agreement at the technical level on what can or cannot be identified. This is evidenced in the unanimously adopted summary of the report of the recent meetings of scientists and other experts to discuss the technical aspects of the control of an underground test ban under the auspices of the International Institute for Peace and Conflict Research in Stockholm (ENDC/230).

3. The United Kingdom Delegation understand fears that on-site inspection might present difficulties but recognise that below the identification threshold there can be no certainty whether a given event is an explosion or an earthquake. In these circumstances it is reasonable for parties to a comprehensive test ban treaty to ask for such verification to be provided as is possible, practicable and necessary to ensure that other parties are honouring their obligations. In order to dispel the fears of those who maintain that on-site inspection would present difficulties and to meet the needs of those who maintain that the possibility of on-site inspection is vital for the conclusion of an effective comprehensive test ban treaty, the United Kingdom

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Delegation suggest that consideration should be given to the establishment under such a treaty of a committee whose function it would be to consider evidence of possible infringement of the treaty. Such a committee would have the right to carry out on-site inspection but only if strong evidence were produced of an infringement of the treaty.

4. The United Kingdom Delegation's views on the composition of the committee are flexible. They seek first to gain acceptance of the principle of its establishment. But they suggest that it might be composed of representatives of the three nuclear weapon states parties to the treaty, representatives of three non-aligned countries, and a nominee of the United Nations Secretary-General or the Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency. It is suggested that apart from the United Nations or the International Atomic Energy Agency nominee the members of the committee might be government representatives, assisted by scientific advisers, rather than themselves scientists. The right of on-site inspection would only be exercised if the committee agreed by a majority of 5-2 that a prima facie case had been made out. While the committee would have the ultimate right of on-site inspection, the procedure proposed is specifically designed to circumscribe this right in such a way as to ensure that it was not exercised irresponsibly or improperly.

5. As scientific knowledge and the means of detection and identification develop, the need for and the probability of on-site inspection would diminish. No country adhering to the treaty would be submitting to any certain or automatic on-site inspection. But the possibility that inspection might take place would play a very large part in establishing confidence in the effectiveness of the treaty.

6. While the United Kingdom Delegation are in favour of the conclusion of an effective test ban treaty at the earliest possible moment they have also been considering the possibility that the implementation of the comprehensive test ban might be made a phased operation by starting with an agreed annual quota of underground test explosions. This proposal is based on recognition of the fact that it may not be possible to get agreement now to stop all nuclear weapons testing over night in isolation from other measures of disarmament. The object of the quota proposal is to put an increasingly powerful brake on the development of new nuclear weapon systems with a view to bringing this dangerous process to a complete halt

within a fixed time period. The treaty might provide for quotas on a descending scale over a period of four or five years ending with a nil quota after which further tests would be banned absolutely. Alternatively, the quotas might not be written into the treaty but fixed annually, possibly by a committee of the kind which has been suggested above. Supervision of the quota arrangements would be exercised by the same mechanism as proposed above for the treaty itself.

7. It will also be necessary under a comprehensive test ban treaty to provide for the carrying out of operational or experimental nuclear explosions for peaceful purposes. The United Kingdom Delegation consider that such a requirement could be accommodated within the system proposed. There may well be a need for international supervision of peaceful nuclear explosions, in order to satisfy states party to the treaty and the international committee that the explosion in question was needed for its stated purpose. Peaceful nuclear explosions could also be accommodated within a quota system, either by treating them as part of the quota or as permitted exclusions from the treaty provided they conformed to internationally agreed arrangements for their conduct.